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ABSTRACT

This book was designed by a group of teachers and would-be teachers to let their voices be heard, their concerns aired, their suggestions heralded, and their ideas concerning students at risk be proclaimed. The following articles are presented: (1) "Children in Poverty" (Cris Fruzza, Carlos A. Bonilla, Katherine L. Lauderdale, Eric Affleck); (2) "Teen Pregnancy: The Truths and the Consequences" (Carlos A. Bonilla); (3) "Teenage Pregnancy: Where Are the Dads?"; (4) "Adolescent Depression: Crisis in Our Schools"; (5) "Torn Apart By Divorce: When a Family is Shattered to Pieces..."; (6) "The Biology of Aggression" (Carlos A. Bonilla); (7) "Nippin' Hostility in the Bud: Empowering All"; (8)"Help Me Understand" (Jennifer Cain Neal); (9) "Who's Hurting Who? Violence in Education"; (10) "Violent Homes, Violent Children" (Katherine Lynn Lauderdale). These articles provide current information and statistics that would be helpful for educators and parents. Each article includes a bibliography. (MKA)

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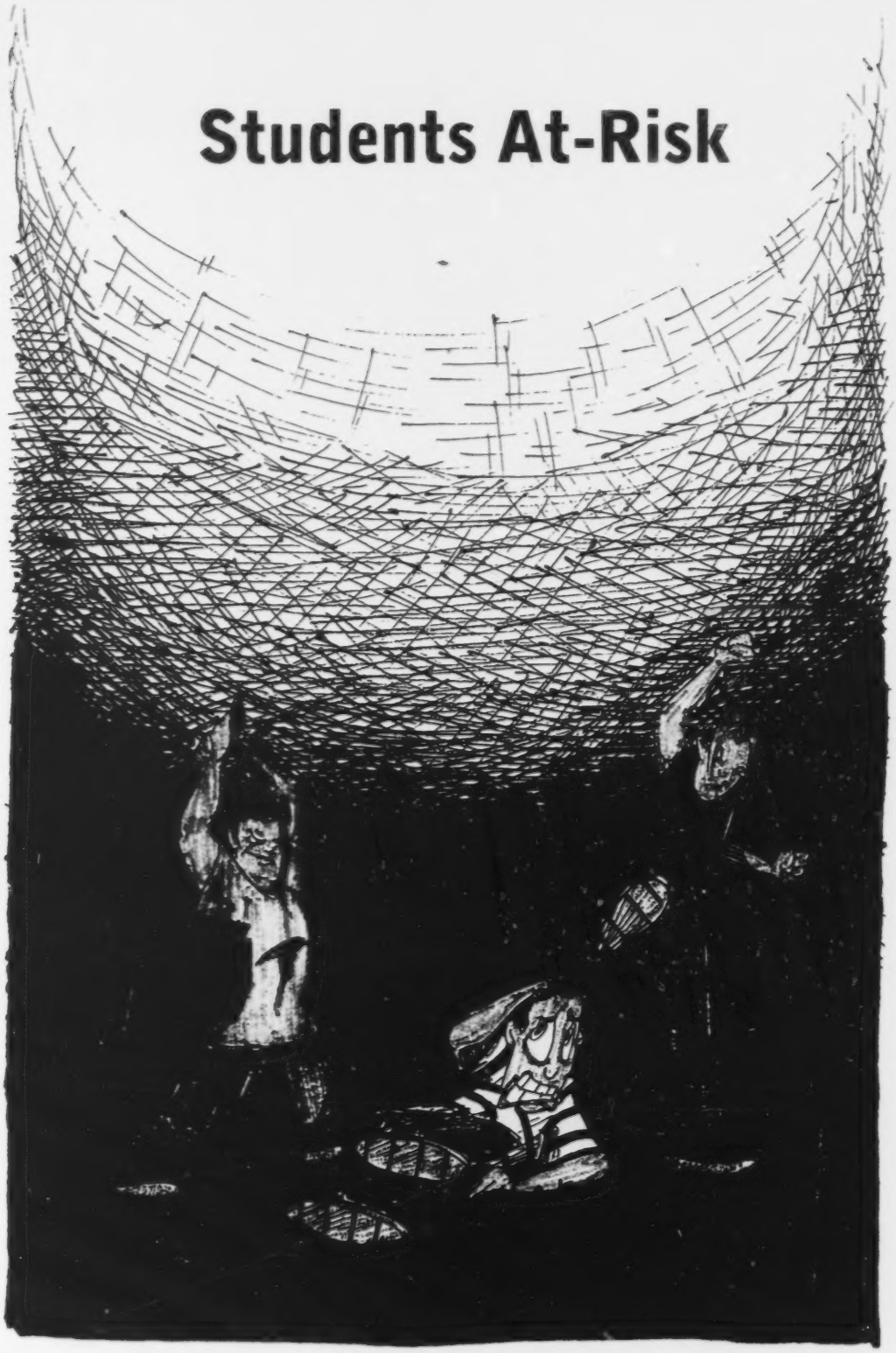
Students At-Risk



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Students At-Risk

Poverty, Pregnancy, Violence, Depression, and The Demise of the Traditional Family

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Students At-Risk

- Poverty
- Pregnancy
- Violence
- Depression

and

The Demise of the Traditional Family

Students At-Risk

Poverty, Pregnancy, Violence, Depression and The Demise of The Traditional Family

Learn about the problems children and adolescents face today:

- **Poverty**
- **Pregnancy**
- **Absent Fathers**
- **Depression**
- **Divorce**
- **Bullies**
- **Violence**

The Legend

And it came to pass that in the year 1997, near the end of the millennium and coincident with the appearance on Earth of Hale-Bopp, the comet, a group of teachers and would-be teachers came together in Stockton, California.

And, so it followed, that while taking a class at National University, these same teachers and would-be teachers decided it was time for their voices to be heard, their concerns to be aired, their suggestions to be heralded and, more importantly, their ideas to be proclaimed.

After all, whoever bothers to ask the teachers just how they feel things should be done, how classroom teaching could be improved?

So, let it be said, that the result of their hard teamwork, came to fruition in the manner of this publication, their book, appropriately titled 'Students at Risk: The Teachers' Call to Action.'

Enjoy.

The Editors

*From: Students At-Risk, First Edition, 1997

Contributors:

Carlos A. Bonilla is a molecular biologist and human geneticist who has published extensively in the fields of toxicology, pharmacology and education. A former National Heart and Lung Institute (NIH-Cardiac Functions Branch) special fellow in Cardiovascular medicine. Dr. Bonilla has devoted much of his time during the past fifteen years-as a consultant, columnist and author- to the problems affecting K-12 students in general and Latino students in particular.

Cris Fruzza is married with two children. He teaches 4th grade in the Stockton Unified School District, in Stockton, California. Cris loves to play golf and also participates as a guest speaker on K-8 educational issues. His work has appeared in ***"Students At-Risk: A Teachers' Call to Action"*** (ICA Publishing, Inc. 1997).

Joyce L. Goss teaches first grade in the Lodi Unified School District; she has co-edited four books dealing with K-12 education issues and has authored several papers. The reasons and difficulties encountered in choosing teaching as her second career were featured in Sherri Eng's "Go-Getter" career section of The San José Mercury News, December 31, 1997.

Katherine Lynn Lauderdale is in pursuit of a doctorate in Clinical Psychology. She is self-employed as a consultant for accounting and computer software, tutors college students and consults on a variety of issues: Domestic Violence, Assertiveness Training, Sexual Harassment and Child Development. She resides in Stockton, California. Kathie co-authored and co-edited a number of publications, the latest titled "***Addictive and Compulsive Disorders: A View from the Trenches*** " (ICA Publishing, 1999).

Illustrators

Eric Affleck is a cartoonist whose work appears weekly in IMPACT, the official newspaper of San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California. Eric, 21 years old, is pursuing a degree in fine arts under the guidance of Mario Moreno. His work has also appeared in newspapers and several books.

Peter Weese is a 17-year-old Junior in High School. His passion is drawing and art. He plans to attend art school and pursue a career as a cartoonist or an illustrator. Peter 's work has appeared in many books, the last one ***Addictive and Compulsive Disorders: A View From the Trenches***" (ICA Publishing, Inc. 1999).

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Children In Poverty

Cris Fruzza

Carlos A. Bonilla

Katherine L. Lauderdale

Eric Affleck

What is Poverty

Poverty is a nation-wide epidemic. Over 40 million people today live at or below the poverty level. These are families who do not have the money for the basic necessities of life and may, or may not, be living on the streets. Most are undernourished, lack health insurance and cannot afford to see a doctor when they are sick.

To set the poverty levels, the federal government uses the household food consumption survey which indicates what different size families spend monthly on food. This figure is then divided by three since the average family spends one-third of its income on food. Incomes lower than the basic amount figured for a given size family are considered to be at, or below, poverty level.

Poverty rates vary widely across the nation. The latest figures, released February, 1999 (Census Bureau, 1999) indicate sixteen states and the district of Columbia have rates above fifteen (15) percent (Fig.1).

Where Most of the Poor Reside

State	Poverty Rate %	State	Poverty Rate%
Mississippi	21.4	Alabama	17.6
Louisiana	21.2	**California**	**16.5**
Washington D.C.	20.8	Arizona	16.3
New Mexico	20.2	Montana	15.8
West Virginia	19.9	New York	15.8
Arkansas	18.5	South Carolina	15.7
Texas	18.2	Georgia	15.6
Oklahoma	18.2	Florida	15.2
Kentucky	17.9		

United States: 13.8

Figure 1: A family of four is considered poor if its income was below $15,569/Year; for a family of three below $12,158/year. Census Bureau Update for 1995.

Who is affected by poverty?

Poverty affects all ages, all ethnicities, all races and all creeds. Half of our nation's poor, however, are under 18 years of age. In 1996, 20.5% of all children were living in poverty. Introduced to it sometime during their life, most are born poor and living in the central cities (fig. 2 & 3).

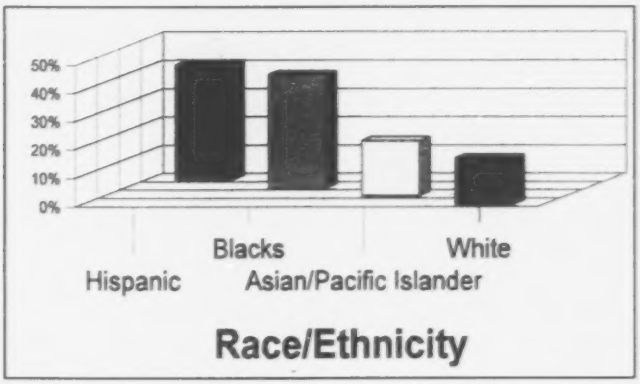

Figure 2

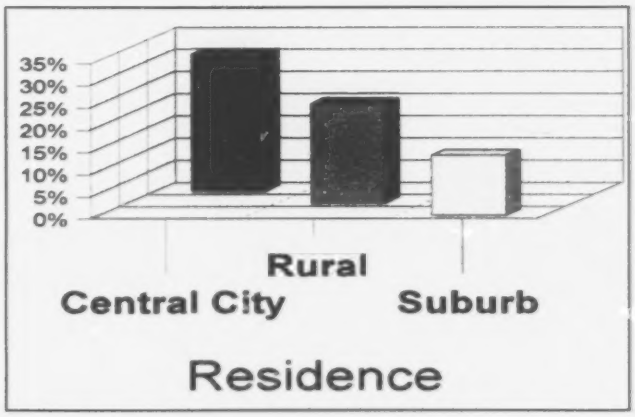

Figure 3

"In 1996, 30.8% of children living in poverty were from the inner city."

Children in Poverty (1996)

Children who are raised by a single parent (especially single women) constitute 49.3% while those who grow-up in a two-parent family make up only 10.1% of poor children. Minorities (especially Hispanics) are more likely to live in poverty than white families; even in a two-parent family, Hispanics are 71% more likely than Blacks, and 14% more likely than whites, to be poor and when children under six are present in their two-parent families, the poverty rate skyrockets another 14%.

Poverty and Education

There are many factors that determine poverty; regardless, its effects can be devastating. A good number of our students are underachieving, but do we ever stop and ask ourselves, why? Let's take a look.

Before considering how poverty influences children in the classroom, let's discuss the early stages associated with being poor. When a family can not afford to feed the children, developmental delays and damage may occur; this in turn affects their ability to function well in the classroom.

Children become disinterested/inattentive, develop poor learning skills, have a higher rate of drop outs, and most important, they lose hope. These factors are a result of hunger, malnutrition, possible abuse, or poor health. We must find ways to help and encourage all our youth, (particularly those living in poverty) to succeed in school. Otherwise, what hope do we have for future generations?

We need to nurture children, give them hope, peace and strength; if we do not, we will continue to see more teen pregnancies, more people on welfare, more families mired in the culture of poverty. No one chooses to be poor, but we

must work with what we have. Let's make education an important part of life again. If we, as teachers, are not motivated, how can we possibly motivate our students?

Hispanic Children In Poverty

Studies have shown poverty affects men and women of all ages and all ethnic groups. According to a report by the Census Bureau, in 1995 the ethnic group showing the highest percentage of persons at or below poverty are Hispanic.*

In 1992, the percentage of Hispanic school aged children (6-17 years of age) living in poverty was 36.5% and expected to reach 40.3% in the near future. Whites, Asians and African Americans all face poverty but Hispanic communities seem to be the most in peril. The reasons are many: family size, lack of parental education, inability to obtain higher paying jobs.

Poverty Leads to Underachievement in School

What does poverty have to do with a child's ability to learn and achieve in school? On the surface it would seem how big the house or how nice its furnishings have little relation to participation in the educational system. Does it matter if a child comes to school in a new BMW, in an old model station wagon, or on the bus? No, not really. But, side effects of poverty do have a great impact on a child's ability to be attentive, comprehend and retain, all of which are part of the learning process.

How poverty leads to underachievement is a multi-faceted, complex problem! Moreover, the harm is cumulative, becoming more painful, damaging and harder to overcome as the child grows and develops.

* Hispanics, an ethnic group, can be of any race.

Consider:

- ☼ Poor children are less likely to receive regular health care. There is a strong relationship between the health of a child and family income. The lower the income, the fewer dollars available to spend on health care, whether it be preventive, routine or emergency. Medical care is often not sought until symptoms are severe and the child is very sick. The percentage of Hispanic youth under the age of 18 not covered by health insurance is 26.7%. This is the highest rate in the nation (for Blacks 15.1% and Whites 12%). Poor health contributes to school absenteeism caused by more severe and longer illness.

- ☼ Poor children are less likely to eat well-balanced, nutritious meals. Good nutrition is an essential building block for physical and mental development.

- ☼ Poor pregnant women are less likely to receive proper prenatal care. Often they receive none at all. Thus, they deliver low-birth weight babies who are more likely to be sickly and have learning disabilities.

- ☼ Poor children are more likely to live in substandard housing. In bad living conditions the chance of illness, or harm, is increased by unclean living areas, insects and rodents carrying and spreading disease, rat and other kinds of poison left around, inadequate heat in winter time and lead contamination.

- ☼ Poor children are more likely to be hungry and those who are hungry are more likely to experience and suffer from fatigue, dizziness, irritability, headaches, ear infections, frequent colds, unwanted weight loss, inability to concentrate, and higher absenteeism from school.

- Poor children are more likely to spend less time in school, even to the point of dropping out, due to economic pressures. Hispanics are almost three times as likely to leave school than non-poor children. The high school completion rate for Hispanic students in 1996 was only 61%. Nearly half of the dropouts leave by the eight grade; many need to get a job to help support the family but these jobs can interfere with homework and study time.
- Recent research shows that working more than half-time during the high school years can negatively affect academic performance. Many find out there are ways to make a quick and substantial amount of money in ways other than by going to school. It is not uncommon to find young kids in the inner cities becoming lookouts and runners for drug dealers; many succumb and become drug users themselves. Why should they spend their time trying to do well in school, when the potential monetary benefits are not as great as the street activities?
- Poor children are less likely to get the needed educational support at home, especially among Hispanics, where parents have limited English skills and lower levels of formal education.
- Poor children are more likely to be discriminated against in the classroom. They are labeled as "free lunchers, slow, nuisance, and the problem child."

"Hispanic students under the age of 16 are three times more likely to dropout than other students."

Child Hunger

Every night it's the same old thing. We go to the church for dinner, walk home to our one bedroom apartment and get in bed for a night full of bad dreams. In the morning we walk around town looking for food in garbage cans. We find cereal boxes with a little cereal left in it and a rotten apple. At six o'clock we start walking to the church for our dinner. I made a poem that expresses my feelings about the way my day crawls by:

Cereal and a rotten apple for breakfast
Nothing for lunch
A dinner at the Baptist Church
And that's the way my day goes by.

-Cathy, a 5th grader from New Mexico

Why the Increase in Latino Poverty?

There has been a steady increase in the poverty rate, runaway inflation, and depressed currency in Latin-American countries. Due to malnutrition and a high infant mortality rate, Latin-Americans flee from hardships to the United States only to face similar situations.

"Teachers and schools need to be aware of the cultural differences within the Hispanic population."

Language barriers, low educational levels and poverty-stricken families face new problems; new children who fall behind academically feel trapped between cultures and yield to pressure by their peers.

Solutions That Can Make a Difference

These solutions can be tried to help students get involved and interested in school:

* Be aware of cultural differences within the Hispanic population -e.g.. Avoid lumping all Latino children together in one class. If there is reform in methods, students must be separated into differentiated groups
* Improvements in health, nutrition, and prenatal care programs -e.g.. Expansion of school lunch program, school-based health clinics for all students.
* Expansion of youth programs and preventing abuse- e.g.. Parent education programs, home health care visits.
* Inform parents about the importance of their children's education. Make Hispanic parents feel welcome by the school system.
* Increasing school, community and parent involvement - e.g.. Increase involvement of parents and community in school environment, dropout prevention, apprenticeships.
* Improvement in school administrative and support services - e.g.. Support for all the populations they serve by understanding their cultural background.
* Enhanced relevance of instruction - e.g.. Use each child's cultural knowledge to build skill acquisition, culturally-relevant curriculum, high academic expectations, heterogeneous instructional grouping.
* Equitable and efficient use of resources -e.g.. Funding of needy schools, resources to attract better trained staff and better teaching materials.

Poverty is a tremendous problem kids face today. We, as teachers, need to be aware of our students' situations at home and in society. Poverty affects all ages and all ethnicities. There needs to be a push and a will to help students feel more comfortable in school. Parents must become more involved in the school community and their kids' lives. With the combination of hard work and determination, students living in poverty can be successful in life.

* * * * * * * * *

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Teenage Pregnancy

Illustration by Peter Weese

Teen Pregnancy

The Truths and The Consequences

By Carlos A. Bonilla

Much has been written about pregnant teens over the past three decades but, just in case any of us may have forgotten, let's review and up-date our knowledge.

The Truths:

Teen's View *(circa* 1997)

No question about it: Teenage Pregnancy is a tangled mess; we all know that, but has anyone bothered to ask the teens themselves? Some have. Consider:

When 95 West High School students in Denver, Colorado participated in a program designed to examine this problem, some of their salient queries were:

- Who are the mothers?
- Who are the fathers?
- Why are 60 of our classmates already worried about 3 a.m. feedings and diaper rash?

Their findings, following half a school year of hard work conducting their own surveys, uncovered some sad, hard and little known truths:

- adult boyfriends combined with past sexual abuse are twin villains conducive to young girls taking sexual risks
- preaching of abstinence by parents is usually ignored
- poverty may be a more powerful factor in teen pregnancy than race or ethnicity
- teens living in poverty are less likely to use contraception and less likely to have an abortion
- authorities should crack down harder on adults who engage in sex with younger girls

In Colorado it is a felony when an adult has sex with someone younger than fifteen years of age; if the adult is at least four years older than the victim, and ***THESE GIRLS ARE TRULY VICTIMS***, it is considered statutory rape. But in 1997 only 540 cases were prosecuted, a pittance considering the numbers of young girls impregnated by adult men. Some of the hard truths uncovered by the teens in surveying their peers:

Sexually Active Teens
▸ half of sexually active 15 and 16-year-old girls were involved with men four years, or more, older
▸ because the girls were over 14, the cases, generally could not be tried as statutory rapes
▸ 73% of the 15-year-old girls thought it was fine to have a boyfriend four or more years older, 50% of 16-year-old girls though the same
▸ 60% of 14-year-old boys considered themselves sexually active
▸ 31% of 17-year-old girls considered themselves sexually active

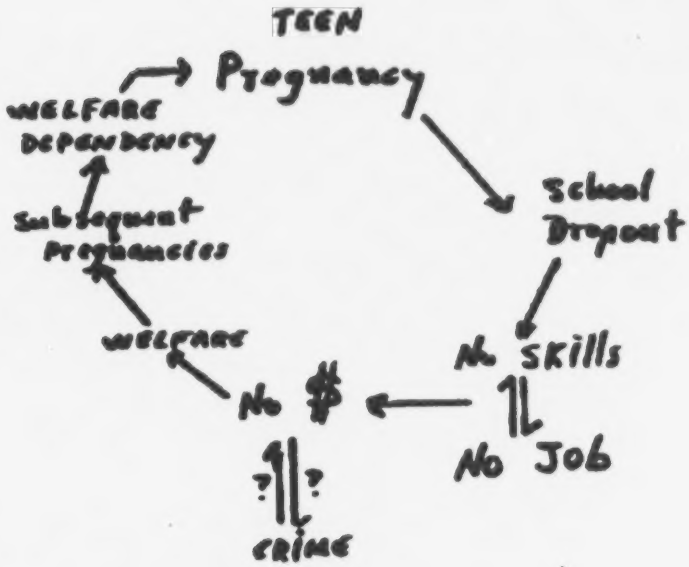
So much for Denver, Colorado; but, what about the rest of the nation? What about our own California? Intense efforts to reduce teenage sex and pregnancy are beginning to pay-off nationwide; last year the National Center for Health Statistics reported a substantial decline in teen-age birth rates; the sharpest decline was observed among black teens who, until recently, had the highest level of births.

Decline? Why? Better use of contraceptive methods, fear of AIDS, education, self-imposed abstinence and The National Media Campaign to prevent teen pregnancy are some of the factors playing a part. In California, the rate of babies born to young mothers dropped more in 1996 than it had in the previous 25 years; for comparative purposes, 1995 birth rates per 1,000 women ages 15-19 years were:

Highest:	Mississippi	85.6
	Nevada	75
	Arizona	75
	California	66-75
	Colorado	56-65
	Utah	45-55
Lowest:	Massachusetts	33

The Consequences

And the consequences? Dire to say the least. Pregnant teens tend to become mired in the proverbial **CYCLE OF POVERTY** which essentially goes like this, although a number of other variants exist.



Teen Pregnancy and the "Cycle of Poverty"

California has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates (birth/1000) in the nation but the highest number of pregnant teens because of its large population, despite the reported decline in birth rates in 1996. The state, on the verge of a teenage population boom, is likely to see its pregnancy rate soar in the near future since the increase in the adolescent population has been forecast at a whopping 34 percent. The financial and social costs could be overwhelming; the annual expenditure in state and federal funds is now well over $7 billion to cover public assistance-welfare, food stamps and Medi-Cal-to families arising from teenage pregnancies.

Let's add to this the problems and costs arising from criminal behavior associated with pregnancies at an early age; did you know this?

"Sons of teenage mothers are almost three times more likely to end up on prison as other men!"

Protracted costs to taxpayers? Staggering!!

Results of a recent study highlight further problems associated with teen pregnancies; it indicated the babies of young, unmarried, poorly educated women are far more likely than others to fall victim to homicide. The study, by Mary Overpeck, showed:

- babies of girls under age 17 constitute 7% of all infant homicide victims; this is significant since this age group is responsible for only 2% of all births
- the babies of female school dropouts (those not finishing high school) have 8 times higher risk than those from girls who graduated from college
- for females under the age of 19 who have multiple children the risk of infant homicide is 9 times higher than for those having children after age 25

It appears the only intervention shown to prevent abuse in the early years of life is home visits to single, poor, young mothers (Winslow, 1998).

Finally, what about the young girls themselves, their responsibility? Debra J. Saunders, a San Francisco Bay Area Columnist summarized it very well:

"These poor kids. Their decision is selfish and they will pay for it. Their ignorance is staggering, and their children will pay for it. And if they are wrong-headed what do you expect? They are, after all, children."

- D.J. Saunders
San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle
Sunday, July 7, 1998

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Teenage Pregnancy

Where are the dads?*

* Adapted from "Students -At Risk: The Teachers' Call to Action"

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Where are the dads?

An African proverb, "It takes an entire village to raise a child," seems to have resurfaced, of late, due to the overwhelming push to instill values back into our country. Whatever your beliefs, whatever role you play in the life of a child (parent, teacher, minister, friend), you must agree that to some extent the proverb is true because each of us has the ability to influence those with whom we come in contact. All Americans need to examine more closely the concepts of love and family, the importance of belonging, and the effects these have on a person.

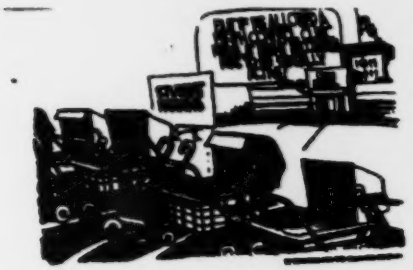
Many people become outraged when speaking of values because they feel it is something the parents should be instilling in the home. We agree, but as educators, let us not forget we spend large amounts of time with children, particularly at some of their critical physical and emotional developmental stages. If the term "values" is too large for you to swallow, perhaps we need to look at it from a different viewpoint. If asked to name some values (particularly focusing on sexually active teens), what kind of terms would you include: disciplined, focused, goal-oriented, integrity, patient, pride, responsible? Would you agree not only could the words mentioned be values but also skills? If they are skills, then would not it be reasonable to expect they be taught?

"And those people with no children, but think they'd like to have them someday to fulfill their lives. Remember: With fulfilment comes responsibility." This dedication by Bill Cosby in his book *Fatherhood,* emphasizes the importance of a mother and father's responsibility in raising a child. His underlying message to all dads is quite serious: care for, nurture and discipline your children and do it all with love. It sounds like a basic, common sense approach but, in reality, with

teenage pregnancy at high levels, the fathers are simply "not there" for their children. This leaves the mothers alone to raise them in difficult, often harrowing circumstances.

How does this affect teenage pregnancy?

"One of the best contraceptions is hope" (Jakobson, 1991). This statement is still applicable ten years later when discussing the ramifications of teenage pregnancy. On February 14, 1997 an Alan Guttmacher Institute study showed pregnancies among teens were down worldwide, primarily through education efforts with young girls. This is also true for the United States (Hamm, 1997). However, we still lead all industrialized nations in teen pregnancy rates.



The popular perception of American teenagers is they are rebellious and promiscuous. They would not be getting pregnant if they were not basically immoral and were more disciplined, right? This biased view is not supported when we look at who is getting pregnant and by whom.

- Between 50% and 75% of teenage girls were impregnated by men in their 20s and 30s!*
- Between 11% and 20% of teenage girls are pregnant due to rape. *
- In California, men over 20 are 5 times more likely than middle school boys to impregnate middle school girls.
- Between 50% and 66% of girls were sexually molested before their first pregnancy as a teen.*
- The younger the girl, the larger the age range of her male partner. For example, girls 12 and under are found to be impregnated by "boyfriends" at least 10 years older. The range is much smaller in girls over the age of 15.

* Dependent on your state's statistics.

"You know what really fries me? It's when she doesn't know who the father is and then gets pregnant by the same guy. She's moved 48 times and the same guy just happens to find her? C'mon."

-Kris Reiman
Merced County
Family Support

When a girl reaches that age, in our culture, she is looked on as beautiful. The men want to have her and she wants to marry so she is... "not to be leftover cake."* This is not surprising when one hears about the sex clubs open to American tourists or men purchasing young brides from Third World countries. More startling is the prevalence of sexual abuse of teenagers in our own country. This is not a new cultural phenomenon. In 1885, the average legal age of consent in the United States was ten years old!. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (of Prohibition fame) worked to bring the age closer to our current standard of eighteen years (Oden, 1995). These were women who could not even vote and yet they changed the sexual mores of their time.

"Those kids are the government's problem!"

American children are more likely to end up on the welfare rolls if their mothers were pregnant as teenagers. With welfare reform no longer rhetoric but a firm reality, many states are devising ways to alter payments to poor women. California State Senator Dick Monteith, R-Modesto, has introduced Senate Bill 284 to help lengthen the statutory rape limit. This would extend the time limit to one year after the crime is reported. Most of these crimes against young girls are not even exposed until after pregnancy becomes an issue or if they seek Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC). By then it is usually too late to prosecute (Smith, 1997).

* said by a Cambodian woman living in San Joaquin County, California.

What does this have to do with fatherhood?

In homes without fathers children lack the role model provided by them on a daily basis. Studies have shown mothers spend more time verbally explaining things to children, cuddling and asking them to be cautious in their endeavors. Fathers, on the other hand, encourage their children to attain goals through play and competition, for example by climbing to the top of the jungle gym and/or succeeding in school (Blankenhorn 1995).

In the eighteenth century men were in charge of the education, well-being and care of their children. Parenting manuals were written primarily for men and they received sole custody in cases of divorce. By the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution's impact was to turn fathers into bread winners outside the home. Yet they were still in charge of a child's morality. The fathers would be scorned and shamed if their children acted in an irresponsible way. In the twentieth century, fatherhood has not so much diminished as fractured into such small pieces that many men are unsure of what role they are to play (Blankenhorn 1995). Many end up feeling free to abdicate their social responsibility altogether. This can have tragic consequences for the children involved. Here's why...

- ***Fatherless*** (the lack of a male role model) girls are 111% more likely to become pregnant as teens and 164% more likely to have these children out of wedlock.
- ***Fatherless*** sons are 300% more likely to be incarcerated in state juvenile institutions.
- 70% of all incarcerated males, adult and juvenile, were ***fatherless*** sons.
- ***Fatherless*** children are two times more likely to drop out.
- ***Fatherless*** children are 50% more likely to have learning disabilities
- ***Fatherless*** children are 100-200% more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems.
- ***Fatherless*** young adults are two times as likely to need psychological help (Lewis, 1994).

Although states are trying to legally punish delinquent fathers, our job, as educators, is to help the children in any way possible. One solution is to become active participants in mentoring programs. One of the oldest mentoring organizations in this country is **Big Brothers-Big Sisters of America**. This organization utilizes one-on-one, professionally-supported relationships between young people and caring adult volunteers. Mentors act as surrogate parents, teachers, friends and child advocates. They are the role models who encourage and build the self-confidence of young people. In so doing, they are actually making strides in changing the lives of their mentorees. A four year study of boys in the program found they were making real personal gains: they experienced more academic success, had fewer encounters with the police, were better able to strengthen their family relationships and even took more pride in their appearance (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996).

The court system does not help when it forces fathers who care, out of their children's lives. Divorce and other relationship breakups can be difficult, and even bitter; often times participants do not play fair. Restraining orders, visitation rights, allegations of abuse and even child support are a few of the obstacles facing divorced fathers today. "The restraining order 209A, as it exists today, makes false abuse allegations the easy way to gain an advantage in divorce and/or a custody hearing" (CPF Pamphlet, 1997).

After a three year court battle just for visitation rights, one man writes, "I hope in time people will realize control over other people at the sacrifice of children is more than just morally wrong; it can ruin a constantly growing string of lives, most notably our children." Not all fathers fall into the "deadbeat dad" category. Those men only comprise approximately 11% of fathers in this country (Dean, 1995). The largest problem of fatherlessness comes from those men that

impregnate many teenage girls and are, at best, peripheral images in their children's lives (Blankenhorn, 1995).

The data on boys is saddening. Sons watch their fathers interact with their mothers, the rest of the family and the community. They learn how to handle conflicts, disappointments and setbacks by participating and observing (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996). When a father is not present, most sons have a hard time understanding a man's perspective.

The data on girls explains why so many would be allowing adult men to sexually abuse them. This is a clear case of searching for a father figure in all the wrong places. We cannot aim our educational programs solely toward young girls and expect them to reject adult men who are, not only physically persuasive, but emotionally dominant. We have to raise teenage girls' confidence levels so they will not become targets of abuse by predatory young men. Another Alan Guttmacher Institute study showed those girls who were targeted by educational efforts to delay child bearing, did so (Jakobson, 1993).

"What is working?"

For the past ten years, statistics have shown that traditional curricula increases understanding of subject matter, but does not seem to change risk-taking behavior in teens. Currently, the trend in sex education is to implement and emphasize problem solving skills, communication, negotiation skills, and sexual abstinence. This type of curriculum allows students to participate in role playing, group discussions and even homework exercises with a parent.

An innovative program called **Safer Choices**, currently being implemented in California, is noteworthy. Studies have shown that not all teens engage in risk

behaviors, but a large proportion do place themselves at-risk for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and pregnancy (Coyle, 1996).

This school-based prevention program is striving to decrease risk, promote and increase protective behavior of students 14-18 years old. One of its primary goals is to encourage students to make wiser decisions, to avoid unprotected sex and to increase condom use.

An important aspect is involving change within the school and positively influencing the environment, as far as student behavior is concerned. They have created **SCHOOL HEALTH PROMOTIONAL COUNCILS** which encourages student involvment by providing role models who discuss strategies with their peers. Techniques such as role playing, condom-use and negotiation skills are implemented. Newsletters with personal sexual experiences are circulated throughout classrooms and are discussed. These strategies help students become more open in asking questions and bringing up concerns about sexual behavior.

In Santa Clara County, seat of the Silicon Valley of California, Sammy Nuñez works for the highly-successful **Male Involvement Program**, one of only six teen pregnancy prevention programs in the nation to be recognized -- because of its innovative focus – by the federal government (Kaplan, 1999). By visiting schools, juvenile detention halls and local jails, the program's efforts are directed to reach young boys in an attempt to reduce the county's high teen birth rate.

Sammy Nuñez knows, from first hand experience, teen parents are more prone to drop out of school and become mired in the cycle of poverty; he knows about bad, absent fathers and has been one himself. Before birth he was abandoned by his father, dropped out of school at 16, got a girl pregnant at 17 and served four years in prison for attempted murder at the age of 18. From this troubled life, Sammy, now in his mid-20s, has emerged as a powerful voice to

help young Latino boys become proud, responsible and, in doing so, become real men. This is important when one considers that seventy percent of the teens giving birth in both Santa Clara and Alameda (the Oakland area) counties are Latinos.

An exclusive survey of pregnant teens done by *Parade* (2/2/97) magazine found that 97% of the girls questioned said "having parents they can talk to" could help prevent pregnancies among unmarried teens, and 93% said "having loving parents" would reduce the risk. The most important finding was that "having self respect" and "being informed about sex, pregnancy and birth control" would have been critical in preventing these teenaged girls from having children. Perhaps if they had been exposed to this type of program, they would have had better information to prevent their pregnancies through birth control or abstinence.

Programs like **Safer Choices**, and **Male Involvement** are steering us away from the traditional curriculum of "read a book...regurgitate information" and leading us into using creative techniques for providing sex education. This approach seems more pertinent and has a greater effect on today's teens.

Teach By Example

The mission of sex education perhaps needs to be reevaluated. A position that we already possess as *educators: To be the difference maker in the lives of enough young people to have a positive impact on America.* To jump on the band wagon of "What can I do? I'm only one person," is the easy way out. All of us can do wonders if we put our minds to it.

There is the often told story of the grandfather walking on the beach with his grandchild. Every one or two steps, the grandfather would reach down, pick up a sand dollar and throw it back into the ocean. He would take a couple more steps, pick up another, throw it into the ocean, and another, and so on. Finally, the grandchild asked, "Grandfather, what are you doing?" The grandfather replied, "Grandchild, these sand dollars are living organisms. If I don't throw them into the ocean they will die out here in the hot sun." The grandchild asked, "There are thousands of them, what possible difference can it make?" The grandfather reached down, picked up another one and threw it into the ocean while replying, "To that one it makes all the difference in the world" (Zieglar, 1996).

"Children do not choose to be born to a teenage mother and an absent father."

We, the educators, need to remember that children do not choose to live in poverty or to have a parent on drugs; they do not choose to be on welfare or to be born to a teenage mother and an absent father. Regardless of their past history, we cannot fall into line with their detractors. We must stand firm in the belief that all children deserve a chance to succeed.

WITH COMPASSION AND SENSITIVITY WE WILL SUCCEED

If the children fail, and if we have done nothing to prevent it, we shall all lose!!

The Plague of Absent Fathers*

"... The idea that you should care for your children is an idea that is alien to enormous numbers of black men - men who even as they make their babies have one eye on the exit door. There are no excuses for them. They have condemned their children, in so many instances, to lives of poverty and violence, drugs and degradation, ignorance and unhappiness, and bitter, raging failure. They are by far the main reason for the swollen population of blacks in prison and the early termination of so many young black lives.' ....."

Quoted from Bob Herbert's column, "In America" *Tiger's Best Shot*. New York Times 4/18/97.

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Kris Reiman's quote appeared in the Modesto Bee (California) March 31, 1997.

ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION

Crisis in Our Schools

***Adapted from "Minefields in the Way: Growing Up in America**

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Statistics indicate that 2-60% of teens may suffer from some form of depression.

Adolescence is a time of great emotional instability, searching for self, and physical and mental growth. Studies have shown depression affects many adolescents and statistics suggest 2-60% of teens may suffer from some form of it (Mammond). This marks a 200% increase in the number of teenagers diagnosed with depression over the last decade (Blackman). The practice has been to attribute the emotional instability, common for teens, to the "developmental storm" of growing up. Parents and teachers view emotional turmoil of adolescents as natural "growing pains." How, then, are we to help teenagers who truly need assistance dealing with the devastating effects of this malady?

Many people assume they know what depression is because they have had a touch of it in their lifetime. Feeling sad, when hit by one of life's inevitable losses, is natural. For adolescents, it is a loss when changing schools and leaving behind close friends or when breaking up with a boy or girlfriend. Grief can be very intense at first, usually subsides with time, but when it lasts longer than a few weeks, it may lead to major problems, even suicide. A major loss, such as a death, may take a long time to recover and lead to a protracted period of depression.

Many young people go undiagnosed or mis-diagnosed because the symptoms are attributed to normal "hormonal" changes of youth.

Signs Include:
- **appetite changes**
- **sleeping difficulty**
- **feeling helpless**
- **restlessness**
- **grouchiness**
- **aggression**
- **withdrawal**
- **physical complaints**
- **alcohol abuse**
- **drug abuse**
- **sexual activity**
- **suicidal feelings**

Diagnosis of adolescent depression is a daunting task and many factors have to be considered. Teens hide their feelings and professionals resist labeling them as depressive. Until recently, professionals evaluated them using totally inappropriate diagnostic criteria. The causes and symptoms for both (adolescent and adult) depression must be considered separately; they differ because the teenage years are defined by a state of rapid change. It is a serious concern that many young people go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed because their symptoms are attributed to normal hormonal changes of youth. Without treatment, adolescent depression can continue into adult years: it is known to recur (61-90%) in adulthood, wreaking havoc on careers, families, finances. In other words, wreaking their lives. In the short term, noticing any signs is important because "depression itself can have devastating effects on a child's emotional and intellectual growth and development" (Greist). Some signs of adolescent depression include: sleeping difficulties, diminished appetite and weight loss, overeating, or problems in school often resulting in dramatic drops in academic performance. Other signs include feeling helpless and seeing no hope for the future. Feelings of wanting to leave home or of not being understood and approved of, restlessness, grouchiness, and aggression are common. Sulkiness, a reluctance to cooperate in family ventures, inattention to personal appearance and a tendency to social isolation are common findings. Dr. Kathleen McCoy adds to the list of signs of teenage

depression: psychosomatic complex such as headaches, stomach aches, low back pain, fatigue, alcohol, drug use, sexual activity and suicidal feelings (McCoy).

The physical and emotional effects of depression can be extremely serious and, at times, debilitating. People who have suffered both major depression and serious medical illness, such as a heart attack, usually say it was by far their worst experience. Depression has effects throughout the body and disrupts a person's feelings, thinking, behavior, and physical well-being. The most extreme behavioral abnormality is suicide, which suggests the deep and pervasive pain depressed people can feel. "Experts contend depression is a factor in 60% of suicides" (Resnick, 1997).

To many people, the thought that depression can produce so many devastating effects, seems over-dramatic. Continuing and recent studies have shown that about 5% of young people between 14-18 years of age suffer from it but only about 20% of these are diagnosed and, even fewer, receive treatment. This should send a clear notice to parents and educators: depression needs understanding and must be addressed.

Depression is not something that just goes away by itself, or can be "snapped out of" at will. What seems trivial to an adult could well be devastating to a young teen! Adolescents obsess with personal appearance, social acceptance, stress, family problems, and fear of the future. Many teens are self-critical and feel they can never measure up, leading to feelings of failure and inadequacy: ingredients for depression.

Of course, concerns about school can also play a major role. Adolescents may feel internal or external pressure to do well academically. A lower grade can send a teen into a depression tail-spin, and those with depression symptoms caused from other areas in life may find success in school impossible. One student explains its effects at a school setting: "When I was depressed my sophomore and junior years in high school, the academic world was the last place I wanted to be. Like anyone suffering from it, I was not deliberately trying to disrespect the teachers' efforts to conduct a class, but depression overwhelmed me so that I could only see things in the broad spectrum, as opposed to concentrating on one situation at a time, such as a single class."

Dealing with Depression

Classroom Teacher Strategies

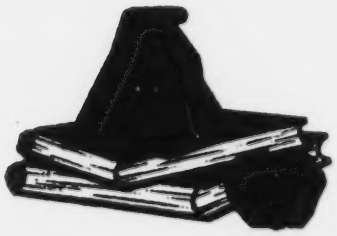
Because depression is a cause of extreme problems, it is imperative the classroom teacher learns steps to recognize it in their students and provide help. Though schools cannot offer long-term therapy or medical diagnosis, they do have an obligation to help troubled children.

Thomas Barrett, School Psychologist and Initiator of the Cherry Creek Suicide Prevention Center (Cherry Creek, Colorado) offers some practical help to teachers and schools. He suggests the following:

- Watch for signs of trouble in the adolescents you teach. If you suspect someone is seriously depressed, remain calm and non-judgmental. Ask questions that will make it clear to your student you do care.
- Rely on your own judgment to decide how urgent the state of depression is. Try to figure out how high the risk is and take action appropriately.
- If a number of students in your class may be going through a crisis causing depression, consider teaching a unit on teenage depression.
- Be reluctant to keep a student's confidence if it becomes apparent depression could be leading to suicide. Report immediately any talk of suicide ideation.
- Resist the urge to offer simple solutions. The pain of depression can lead to very complex problems that cannot be addressed with a shrug of the shoulders and an "oh, well" attitude.
- Resist taking sides with the adolescent against his family if the family is at the root of the depression. You may think you are doing him a favor, but think again. What he probably needs is to be an integral part of his family and peer group.
- Help your student identify the problems that have led up to the feelings of depression. It may surprise you to find out he really does not know or there is a handful of problems. Remember the problems may sound trivial to you, but they are all inclusive to your student. He cannot see beyond them; he cannot understand that they have solutions and will no longer torture him.
- Show him his problems have answers. After you identify them, one by one, help your student work out some solutions. Let him/her do most of the thinking. He needs to know he can cope with the solution process.

Irving Berkovitzs, the senior psychiatric consultant for schools in the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, prescribes six steps every school should take in preventing teenage suicide. These same steps could apply to helping the student suffering from depression:

- ☺ Offer remedial reading classes; researchers have shown a strong correlation between poor reading skills and emotional distress.
- ☺ Help prevent withdrawal and social isolation by encouraging all students to participate in extra curricular activities.
- ☺ Include in the curriculum a more positive study of society, stressing problem solving and the building of an interdependent world.
- ☺ Develop more positive and personalized teacher-student relationships. If classes are too large, lobby the principal and school district to get class sizes reduced. Become involved with each student. Make sure they know you care.
- ☺ Try to see that each student has at least one friend.
- ☺ See that the counselors in your school are allowed to council students and that their time is not monopolized by administrative tasks.



In essence, try to keep morale high between students and school personnel. Foster rich and rewarding relationships between teachers and students and between groups of students. Make sure that parents get the opportunity to participate. Build a strong curriculum that emphasizes community involvement and sense of self.

Finally, above all, keep the school neat, attractive and safe: a place where students want to be. In order for a teenager's problems to change, the family, friends, and teachers have to make some changes too. They may need to revise schedules, learn new communication skills or see the teenagers' behavior from a fresh point of view. None of this is easy, but being open with constructive ideas is important. Taking the risk of change, trying new ways, help the teenager get back in touch with self and others and eventually grow. There is expert and compassionate help available if those involved are willing to use it.

It is the willingness to make the effort that will help save the teenagers.

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Additional Information can be obtained by calling:

- National Youth Crisis Hotline (800) 442-4673
- National Mental Health Association (800) 969-6642

Torn Apart By Divorce*

WHEN A FAMILY IS SHATTERED TO PIECES. . .

*Adapted from "Minefields in the Way: Growing Up in America"
ICA Publishing, Inc. © 1998

rld
Cup

"In the wind tunnel

of divorce,

It's the children

who get blown

right through"*

-Ann Milne,

Executive of the Association of

Family and Conciliations Courts

41

HOME
SWEET
HOME

TORN APART BY DIVORCE

SCENARIO

It is your sixth month of school and today you have already taken care of the rebellion from the poor students and those who simply do not like to write. It is the journal writing class and your students accepted this daily assignment months ago. So, why should this particular day be any different? Because one of your better students decides to object to the journal topic and does so **STRONGLY**. You let it go, thinking, "maybe the journal topic was not as good as I thought or maybe she is having a bad day."

After lunch, upon returning to class the student still appears in an uncharacteristic bad mood and is rude to others. Why? At the end of the day important clues to the emerging problem slap you in the face: this student is hurting emotionally! The journal entry:

"Last night my mom and dad told me they were getting a divorce, I think it is all my fault."

THE FACTS

It is almost the 21st. Century and divorce seems almost a natural outcome with couples who find it hard to get along. In fact, couples who are brave enough to venture into the world of marriage are at a 50% risk of winding up divorced. Unfortunately, many of them do so after having children. Simply stated, divorce affects children's welfare and the impact tends to be long-term.

EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

Children, just like anyone else, experience the five steps of grieving:

- **DENIAL**
- **ANGER**
- **BARGAINING**
- **DEPRESSION**
- **ACCEPTANCE**

Unfortunately, unlike adults, they are unable to express their emotions openly OR effectively. It may take children years to reach acceptance. Divorce, then, becomes the main event of their life, at the expense of learning. Some may go through the daily motions of schooling, others become obsessed with trying to do everything right, while thoughts and fears of a changing life persist.

Divorce affects children:

- **PSYCHOLOGICALLY:**

  Some take on guilt: had they been better, made their bed every day, not argued so much, daddy would not have left, others become angry and unable to fit in with their peers. Sometimes they grow up unable to have satisfying or trusting relationships with their partners.

- **ECONOMICALLY:**

  - Most children of divorce live with their mother.
  - The mother's income is usually drastically reduced. Sometimes there is not enough money to meed basic needs: food, clothing, expenses for extra curricular activities. The family may be forced into the welfare system. When children reach high school age these can have devastating effects.

Did you know?

- Many children of divorce become involved in drug and alcohol abuse, many before the age of fourteen.
- Many children become sexually active especially adolescents, particularly girls
- More children of divorce drop out of high school than children with both parents in the home
- Children of divorce sometimes have a harder time finding a job
- Children of divorce are sometimes insufficiently supervised and poorly protected
- Teens of divorce can be at risk of suicide, eating disorders and depression
- Divorced parents are less likely to send their children to college even when they can afford it

When all of these are taken into consideration the important question becomes: what can a teacher do?

HOW CAN WE, AS TEACHERS, HELP?

- Let children go through the grieving process. This is something that is necessary
- Validate the child's feelings and opinions, both negative and positive
- Accentuate success, self-worth and build confidence
- Adjust explanations but maintain rules and guidelines, you can make certain allowances for the child
- Confidentiality is a must
- Lighten their guilt
- Listen to their needs, try to hear and recognize their feelings
- Start counseling even when the child shows reluctance - advise the child to "just try it," of they don't like it they can quit after a few sessions.

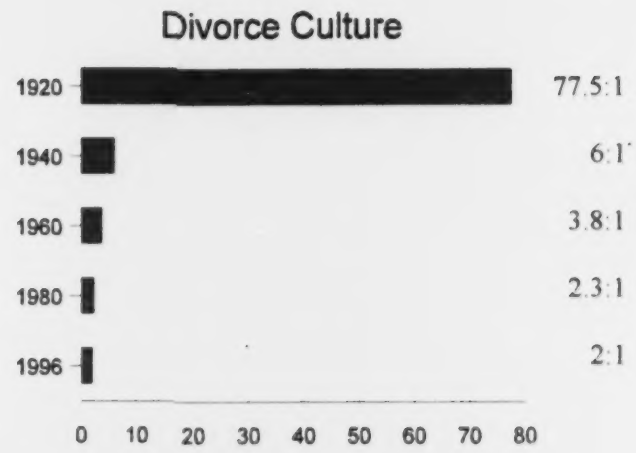
HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

- Let the child know the divorce is between the parents and not the children
- Explain that it is not their job to fix everything
- Recognize there is a transition time between the divorce and the child's acceptance of it; the child has to go through the grieving process
- Spend time with your child
- Have dinner at the table with no TV; allow for open discussion of fears, concerns; ameliorate feelings of guilt
- Try to keep changes to a minimum
- Don't argue in front of your children
- Try family counseling, or support groups

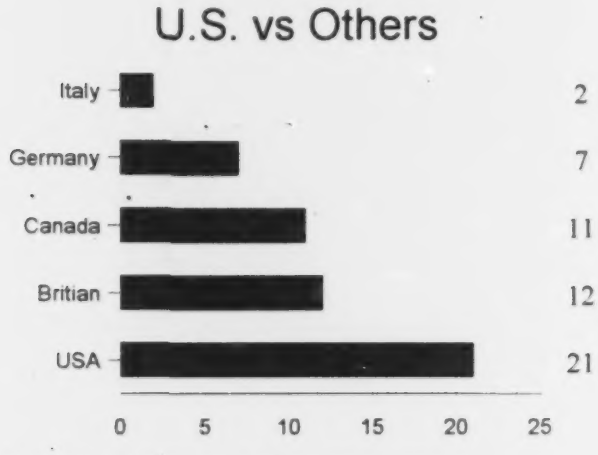
THE CHILDREN OF DIVORCE-TEACHER CONNECTION

Teachers wear many hats in their classrooms: they are role models, counselors, friends, mother, father, disciplinarians, psychologist, and when they have the time, teachers. Chuck Norman summed it up very well:

Teachers once were expected, first, to teach. No more. Today, that is far down on the job description. Now, we are expected to raise them, to impart to them some semblance of culture, to monitor their health, to provide therapy and counseling, to protect them from gangs and drugs, to feed them breakfast and lunch, to motivate them to work hard, to spark their curiosity and love learning, to entertain them, to foster their "self-esteem", and then, only if we have produced children who still care to be bothered, to teach them to read and write and do sums.



Changing ratio of divorces through the decades.*



Number of divorces per 1,000 married women.*

Teachers may have been themselves part of the divorce equation and, meeting the needs of one or more of their students who are in the midst of the emotional turmoil can be very challenging. This effort takes maturity, caring, and knowledge of the problems, cause and effects, and solutions. Most teachers have all of these qualities and are willing to help develop a

* USA Today, June 3, 1997

well-adjusted child no matter how hard the job. The rewards are just too great to be ignored. Ennis Cosby spoke for a lot of teachers:

> ***" I will teach things that are not in the books. For instance, I believe that children will be better students if they like each other better or if they like themselves better. I believe that stability starts inside and then reflects out of a person".***

A child's stability does start from the inside and it is up to teachers and parents to provide a caring, protective, and anchored arena from which the jump into adulthood can be taken!!

BEHAVIOR CHECK LIST WHICH SIGNALS A RECENT DIVORCE

HAVE YOU NOTICED THE FOLLOWING CHANGE S IN ANY OF YOUR STUDENTS?

- ☐ A CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR EVERY OTHER MONDAY FOLLOWING A NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTAL VISIT
- ☐ SADNESS, DEPRESSED, OR CRYING
- ☐ MOODY
- ☐ INATTENTIVE
- ☐ DAY DREAMING
- ☐ ANGER
- ☐ AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
- ☐ LONELINESS
- ☐ A CHANGE IN PERSONAL HYGIENE
- ☐ ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS
- ☐ RADICAL CHANGE IN GRADES UP OR DOWN
- ☐ CHANGE IN SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND FRIENDS
- ☐ FINANCIAL HARDSHIP, BORROWING MONEY, NO LUNCH MONEY
- ☐ ACADEMIC OR BEHAVIORAL REGRESSION

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The Biology of Aggression

Tom Murray, *The Chronicle*

Aggressive Behavior: Finding a Link To Brain Activity

Imagine a person who suffers a head injury serious enough to cause a coma. He emerges neurologically intact, except his personality has changed, turning him from a calm Dr. Jekyll to a sinister, violent, Mr. Hyde. His life was spared, but his behavior is impulsive, socially inappropriate and aggressive.

The biological basis for clues to aggressive behavior are beginning to emerge. At the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience in New Orleans, November 1997, Dr. Daniel Hommer, a senior scientist at The National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, reported; "It is bizarre, these guys look very much like people with antisocial personality disorder, exhibiting bad behavior".

Using PET (Positron Emission Tomography) and MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scans, Dr. Hommer studied patients who had suffered head injuries from car accidents and had been unconscious (comatose) for no less than three days, and as long as a month. They all seemed to recover but their behavior changed for the worse; not only were they prone to acting out aggressively, and impulsively, but as many as two-thirds became addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. The men had no changes in memory or intelligence. Their behavior just became erratic.

The Findings:

- Significant decrease in glucose (sugar) in regions of the brain associated with emotional and social behavior.

- Specifically, limbic regions on the right side of the brain did not appear to process information correctly.

- Similar reductions in glucose were found in the right Caudate Nucleus and right Thalamus.

- Significant correlations between metabolism and aggressive behavior were observed.

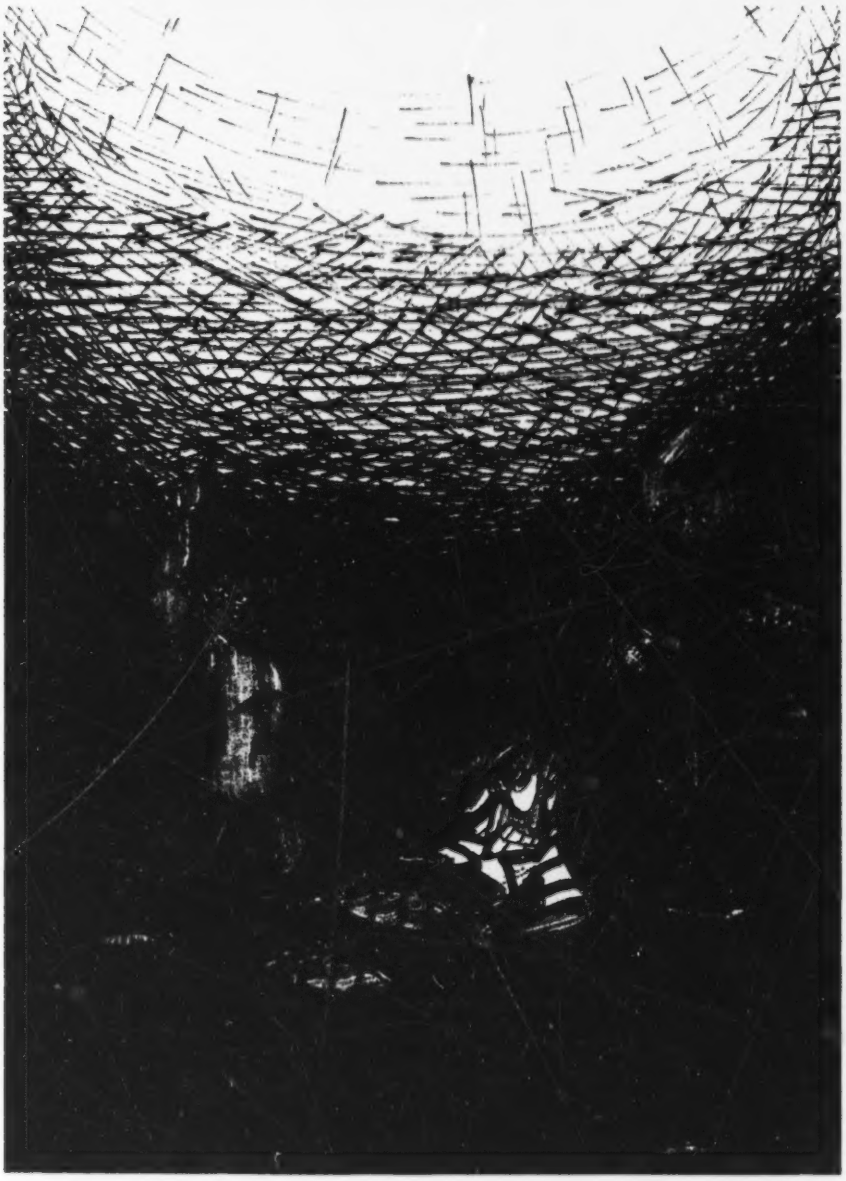
Many of the changes occurred in the right side of the brains, regions known to be very important for emotional control. Whether neurons (brain cells) in the affected regions have been damaged is not yet clear. What's next? Dr. Hommer and his research team will now expand the investigation by doing brain scans on men with antisocial personality disorder who have not suffered traumatic head injuries.

Carlos A. Bonilla

Editor

NIPPIN' HOSTILITY IN THE BUD

EMPOWERING ALL



*Adapted from "Tending to the Needs of Teachers and Children: Tricks of the Trade"
ICA Publishing Inc. ©1998

Blue sky, warm sun, happy kids - it's a great day for baseball. Robert, a fifth grader, steps up to bat. He swings. "Strike One!" The ten year old umpire calls out. Robert frowns and swings at the next pitch - harder this time. "Strike Two!" His pal, Carlos, calls out from behind the plate. The batter grasps the bat harder, narrows his eyes as anger begins to build, swings at the third pitch then hears the dreaded words, "Strike Three!" The fourth swing comes without warning as Robert, enraged, swung the bat towards the head of his best friend, Carlos, narrowly missing. This time Robert was lucky, but what will happen the next time he becomes enraged?

Empower All

More than 30% of new teachers leave within the first five years of teaching.

This game of hostility is played in the classroom daily. If we think back to our childhood we remember the games at recess, friends, and teachers, even the bullies. Every class had at least one kid who picked on the shy, withdrawn, and weaker children. These bullies were constantly pushing the other children around, calling them names, sometimes causing physical harm. This behavior can be a nightmare for both victims and teachers, disruptive and aggravating. Research shows more than 30 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. The primary cause is dissatisfaction with student discipline, hostile behavior of children, and the teacher's inability to control the class. We need tools to empower everyone to nip this hostility in the bud.

WHAT IS A BULLY?

This child tries to scare, intimidate, or physically harm other classmates on a regular basis. Boys and girls both exhibit this type of behavior. Boys tend to use more physical direct forms of bullying: fists fights, taunting, and physically threatening others. Girls, on the other hand, bully in more indirect ways: manipulating friendships, ostracizing classmates, and spreading malicious rumors. Boys pick on either gender, girls usually pick only on girls. Nationwide 9 percent of boys and 2 percent of girls, under the age of eighteen are bullies. They exist in all neighborhoods, ethnicities and socioeconomic classes. Studies show children act in this manner primarily because of their family environment. Those who come from a home where physical and emotional abuse is common, a family member is in prison, psychotic or in a psychiatric hospital tend to be more prone to exhibit "bullying" behavior.

Background characteristics of bullies:

- Family environment
- Physical/emotional abuse in the home
- A family member in prison
- A family member is psychotic
- A family member is in a psychiatric hospital

Teachers observe it everyday and are called to prevent hostility from escalating or even occurring. The statistics are alarming. Grade school boys who are highly impulsive, and always getting into trouble, are three to six

times more likely than self-disciplined children to engage in violent behavior by the time they reach their teens. Girls with similar traits are three times more likely to become pregnant as teens. And grade school girls who cannot distinguish between anger, anxiety, boredom, and hunger are more at risk of developing eating disorders. A recent Justice Department report predicts the number of young people arrested for violent crimes will double over the next 15 years to an exorbitant number: **260,000 annually!** Devoting our lives to training youth, we must join together to beat these astronomic odds. As teachers we must:

- Strengthen victims so they are able to lessen the bullies' opportunities
- Provide bullies with strategies for overcoming hostility
- Help the 85% of children who are neither bullies nor victims

Bullying begins in elementary school, peaks in the middle grades, and decreases in high school. It never disappears.

WE MUST EMPOWER ALL!!

Empowering the Teacher

Teachers who exhibit successful management skills create a sense of "community" in the classroom where children *want* to do their best. Keeping a positive learning atmosphere is a constant challenge, something we observed when visiting several well-managed classrooms.

Consider:

- A consistent behavioral management system.
- Clear and simple rules/rights. "I have the right to be happy and treated with kindness"
- Consequences; Clear expectations will define these. Children make choices and need to learn to think before they act.
- Behavioral contracts. Students need motivating incentives rewarding them for proper behavior. A tracking program allows them to see their day-to-day progress.

Classrooms where these skills were enforced exhibited the highest learning capability. Students displayed learning motivation, social responsibility and self respect.

Empowering Victims

Studies show ***victims*** of bullies need to develop skills to counter abusive behavior, or they in turn will develop the same angry, impulsive, and violent behavior to which they were subjected. Cherry Creek School in Denver, Colorado has implemented the "HA-HA-SO" program to give victims effective tools to deal with bullies. Deciphering the acronym:

- **Help-**Give it or get it.
- **Assert-** Tell them to stop making fun of you!
- **Humor-**Be able to laugh with them.
- **Avoid-**Walk away.
- **Self-Talk-** Use encouraging words to build up your self-esteem.
- **Own it-**Try to understand why a statement was made and clarify if necessary.

We need to encourage the victims to increase their own self-worth in order to rid themselves of bullies

Empowering Bullies

Yes, bullies need power too! Not power to do additional harm, but power to change. We can effectively help them by raising their level of emotional intelligence, promoting self-esteem, providing positive reinforcement, and developing one-on-one relationships.

Unlike IQ, the EQ, or emotional quotient, can be taught. Emotional intelligence is the level of ability with which we can properly and effectively handle our emotions. As teachers, we must teach the basics of it:

- Anger control
- Conflict resolution
- Naming and owning feelings
- Being responsible
- Learning impulse control
- Choosing the best emotional response to touchy situations

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.: Mother Theresa

Research shows students who raised their EQ are better at handling frustration, anger, stress, and anxiety. They became less impulsive, more cooperative and exhibited an overall improvement in behavior. We must provide these children the skills to react emotionally in an appropriate and socially acceptable manner. When children perceive teachers to be caring, positive, and believing they can reach their highest potential they, themselves, respond in a positive way.

A fourth grade "used-to-be-bully" was asked "What has helped you change?" His response:

> ***"I feel better about myself and I like who I am now. I'm nice to myself and understanding of the problems I have. The teacher really cares for me and makes sure things are fair and that other kids treat me kindly. I like the behavior tracking program I'm on. I don't care about the prizes anymore, I just care how I feel inside when I do my best. I feel GOOD!"***

Perhaps the late Ennis Cosby stated it best:

"I was teaching from the heart, and the kid's biggest need seemed to be a teacher who cared about them and their individual needs."

Empowering the Class

Peer influence is a powerful force and, if used effectively, it can be one of the strongest intervention strategies. Teachers are aware of the effects of bully behavior:

- violent outbursts of rage
- emotional and physical pain
- spreading conflict around

Various districts are now setting up conflict/management teams within the schools. Students with good behavior and leadership skills attend an on-site mini workshop and learn to deal with conflicts likely to arise on the school playground and in the classroom. One such program is **CARE:**

- **Creative** problem solving
- **Adult** help
- **Relate** and join in to encourage
- **Empathy**

As supervisors of appropriate behavior these children are called on whenever conflicts arise. By empowering us all with effective intervention strategies, hostility can be nipped in the bud so bullies find themselves in a world where they simply do not fit in.

"I may not remember what you said, but I will always remember how you made me feel."

"I work with kids and try to make them feel that I understand them. I am very stern on good morals and manners. . . I just believe in respect, honesty, and truthfulness. . . I believe that stability starts inside and then reflects out of a person." -Ennis Cosby

Bill and Ennis Cosby at a 1994 New York Knicks game. Ennis Cosby's life was taken by a young man who was not able to deal with his own hostility.

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*Domestic Violence and its effects on children is discussed in K. Lauderdale's chapter, page 78.

**Cheryl Hightower is Superintendent of Alameda County Office of Education, Alameda, California.

Teachers: Are you having a BULLY PROBLEM? We Recommend:

Bully-Proofing Your School: by Carla Garrity, Kathryn Jens, William Porter, Nancy Sager, and Cam Short-Camilli, 1996: $29.95 Contact: Sopris West, 1140 Boston Ave,. Longmont, CO 80501, (303) 651-2829.

Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do. by Dan Olweus, 1993: $ 19.95 Contact; Blackwell Publishers, P.O. Box 20, Williston, VT. O5495; (800) 216-2522.

The Bullying Prevention Handbook: A Guide for Principals, Teachers and Counselors. by John Hoover and Ronald Oliver, 1996, $21.95. Contact: National Education Service, 1252 Loesch Rd. , Bloomington, IN 47402. (812) 336-7700, or (800) 733-6786.

Bully Proof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use With Fourth and Fifth Grade Students. by Nan Stein, Lisa Sjostrom, and Emily Gaberman. 1996, $19.95, plus $5.00 shipping and handling. Contact: Center for Women, Publication. Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley College, 106 Central St. Wellesley, MA 02181; (617) 283-2532.

Guide to Resources

Complete guide to bully proofing: 1-800-547-6747
Bully Hotline: 1-800-NO-BULLY
(set up by Attorney General Charles Condon)

Anti-defamation League: A World of Difference Program
823 United Nations Plaza (212)-885-7810
New York, NY 10017 Fax (212)-490-0187

Children's Creative Response to Conflict:
P.O. Box 271 (914) 353-1796
Nyack, NY 10960 Fax (914) 358-4924

Conflict Resolution & Co-op Learning Center
Peacemakers Program, University of Minnesota/Education and Human Development
60 Peik Hall, 159 Pillsbury Drive: SE. (612) 624-7031
Minneapolis, MN 55455 Fax (612) 626-1395

Educators for Social Responsibility
21 Garden Street (617) 492-1764
Cambridge, Massachusetts Fax (617) 864-5164

International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution
Teachers College at Columbia University
525 West 120th Street Box 53 (212) 466-6272
New York, NY 10027 Fax (212) 678-4048

Resources Continued

National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor (202) 466-6272
Washington, DC 20006-3817 Fax (202) 296-1356

National Institute for Dispute Resolution-National Association for Mediation
1726 M. Street, NW, Suite 500 (202) 466-4764
Washington, DC 20036-4502 Fax (202) 466-4769

National School Safety Center
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd. Suite 290 Fax/Phone (805) 373-9977
Westlake Village, CA 91362

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program-National Center
163 Third Ave, P.O. Box 103 (212) 387-0225
New York, NY 10003 Fax (212) 387-0515

Help Me Understand

By Jennifer Cain Neal*

What's it like to say those words that always cause me pain?
What's it like to hurt me all over again and again?
How's it feel to be you, when your turn your anger on me?
I wish I could understand and see things the way you see.
I guess I'll never know what motivates a man.
To hurt the one who loves him, I'll never understand.
But, I know what it's like to be on the receiving end,
of all those angry actions and for my heart to break and then;
for you to say you're sorry and act like everything is fine.
And then you start all over and treat me so unkind.

✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧

*Mrs. Jennifer Neal, and her husband Jerry Lynn Neal, are the proud parents of Britany, 9 years-old and Tyler, 6 years-old (from Jennifer's first marriage) and Jerry Lynn Neal II, 14 months. The Neals reside in North Carolina.

Who's Hurting Who?*

Violence is in Education.

*Handgun Control, Inc.

* Adapted from "Students At-Risk: The Teachers' Call to Action"
ICA Publishing, Inc. © 1997

WHO'S HURTING WHO?

Violence is in Education

Look into the eyes of a 9 year-old as he defines violence: "Violence means killing somebody." What is violence? If it were to be looked up in a dictionary it would read something like this:

Violence: 1.) Physical force used to cause injury.

2.) Intense powerful force (Webster, 1977).

However, this definition does not define what violence is in our schools or in our children's eyes or in their thoughts.

Handed a lump of clay and told to
work out his energy, 5-year-old Benjamin
pounded it ferociously with his fist.
"I hate you, I hate you, I hate You, Man"
He yelled at the clay.
"I have you, you scum. I'll kill you!"

- San Diego Tribune, 9\29\96

Who are the high risk children?

- Do they all have black or blonde hair?
- Do they all come from poor families?
- Do they all wear long, black trench coats?
- Do they all profess to like GOTH?

Of course not! They are as different as the colors in a sunset. But is the sun setting on these children too soon? How can we help them to avoid becoming violent if we can't even identify who they are?

An interesting study of 135 children ages 4 to 9 arrested for serious crimes showed that all shared characteristics that put them at a higher risk for crime: an estimated 110,00 children under 13 were arrested in 1994 for acts considered felonies, 11,700 were picked up for crimes against people including 39 murders (Montgomery, 1994).

91% Had received AFDC
81% Had family histories of abuse or neglect
70% Had a partner or sibling with a criminal record
70% Had mothers who had their first child when they were younger than 20
63% Were suspended from school at least once
56% Were chronically truant
45% Came from families of four or more children

Another study led by professor Donald West at the institute of criminology at Cambridge University has followed the lives of 411 boys born in 1954. Researchers found the environmental factors most likely to lead to criminal violence among them were: criminal parents, poverty, multiple siblings, and poor parenting. Children who fared poorly in IQ tests were also more likely to become criminals. According to Dr. West those at-risk were easily identifiable during their early school years: they appear scruffy, not responsive to discipline, can't get along with other children and are too aggressive and irritable (Burns, 1996).

Many children without proper supervision or parental leadership are straying to the dark side of crime and violence. The justice department reports most crimes by youth ages 6 to 17 were committed between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. (Butterfield, 1995), showing direct correlation to after school hours, a time with little or no parental guidance .

> ***In Phoenix now, they are willing to buy two sets of textbooks for each student-one for class and one for homework-rather than providing space to hide guns, drugs and liquor.***
>
> -R. Reeves, Seattle Times 4/24/94

Reducing the Risk

Conflict resolution allows children, even at an early age, to learn to work through problems and avoid violent confrontations. The San Francisco Peer Resources Program has trained more than 1,000 students a year (since 1980) to mediate conflicts among their classmates, counsel, tutor and steer

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them away from drugs, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (San Francisco Examiner, 11\12\95).

Children's positive energy can be reinforced by group play and projects.

At preschool and kindergarten group play can lead to the awareness by children that it is productive, and fun, to resolve conflicts through mutually satisfactory resolutions. In the early grades, and preschool, it is sometimes difficult for children to understand and verbalize the reasons for violent confrontation; with the teacher's help in drawing out students' motivations, a reinforcement of the importance of conflict resolution will occur. First, second and third grade classrooms become more structured and the group projects more curriculum-oriented; the reinforcement of positive group decisions and problem solving becomes more obvious as students become more aware of classroom dynamics.

Tom Changnon, Assistant Superintendent of Keyes Elementary School District in California states his school is a safe island in a multi-gang town; he believes in structured consequences and expects his students to know their actions carry them. Keyes Elementary School has little tolerance for behavior that shows a lack of respect to others. Mr. Changnon explained "The School Board is tough and will not allow behavior which is inappropriate for learning."

Parental involvement, parenting classes, and addressing parents as a whole appear out of the realm of teaching pedagogy and instruction. Often these parents become a direct link to a child's violent tendencies. Educators can either fully exclude these violent children or can directly address their problems with the resulting possibility of a student that will be educated, well-rounded, and a viable-member of the community.

Parents must also take an active role in the media exposure to children by controlling television and multi-media usage; they must be reminded of the time commitment necessary to raise children successfully (Levine, 1996).

Every day has to be a good day for the teacher; their outlook and attitude affects the feelings and progress of each student. In the lower primary grades, children are very aware of the teacher's non-verbal communication. In a worse case scenario teachers can sometimes say terrible things to students, perhaps affecting them for their entire lives. "The bully in the classroom is sometimes the teacher." According to a recent study, "a surprising number of teachers, an estimated 10%, had engaged in verbal harassment of students" (Denver Post, 12/26/95).

In conclusion, teachers must be aware that all student are at-risk, either as perpetrators or victims of violence. Educators are put in a position of being responsible for the students in their classes and at school. By becoming aware of violent behavior beginning solutions appear.

Compassion for the victim is the easy road, compassion for the violent child is a much greater challenge.

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School Violence (1997-1999)

According to the National School Safety Center violent deaths at schools have declined across the nation. Shootings within the past 18 months underline the severity of the problem; consider:

Date	Location	School Fatalities
October 1, 1997	**Pearl, Mississippi**	**2**

A 16-year-old boy killed his mother then went to his high school and shot nine students; two died (serving life in prison).

December 1, 1997	**West Paducah, Kentucky**	**3**

A 14-year-old student killed three and wounded five at Heath High School (serving life in prison).

March 24, 1998	**Jonesboro, Arkansas**	**5**

Two boys, 11 and 13, opened fire from the woods into the middle school grounds killing five (four girls and a teacher). Ten where wounded. (Both convicted in juvenile court and can be held only until they are 21 years old).

April 24, 1998	**Edinboro, Pennsylvania**	**1**

A 14-year-old student shot a science teacher to death, in front of students at an eighth-grade graduation dance (awaiting trial).

May 19, 1998	**Springfield, Oregon**	**1**

An 18-year-old honors student killed a classmate who was dating his ex-girlfriend (awaiting trial).

May 21, 1998	**Fayetteville, Tennessee**	**2**

A 15-year-old boy opened fire at high school and fatally shot two teenagers; wounded more than 20 people. His parents were found slain at their home (awaiting trial).

April 20, 1999	**Littleton, Colorado**	**15**

Two youths clad in dark ski masks and long black coats fired handguns and tossed pipe bombs into crowds of terrified students, laughing as they killed. Twelve students and one teacher were slain, and over 20 wounded. The gunmen then committed suicide.

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...the neurological foundation for rational thinking, problem solving and general reasoning appears to be largely established by age 1 - long before babies show any signs of knowing an abstraction from a pacifier!

- Sandra Blakeslee

The New York Times 4/7/97

BOYS
O.K. THE BATHROOM LOOKS CLEAR. ARE YOU READY TO GO?
I THINK I ALREADY DID.
EA '99

Violent Homes

Violent Children

Katherine Lynn Lauderdale

Until recently children were the forgotten victims of domestic violence which no longer remains hidden in the privacy of homes. Children, most witnesses or victims of abuse, are now perpetrating these horrors publicly. "Domestic assault is an inter-generational disease that is replicated indefinitely without meaningful intervention" (McCarty, 1999). An estimated 3.3 million children witness it every year and reports indicate they are present in 41% - 55% of homes where police respond to domestic violence calls. One study of 900 children at battered women's shelters found 70% of the children were victims of physical abuse and neglect (Carlson, 1984). Even if a child is not physically abused, evidence reveals the emotional trauma of witnessing violence in the home is similar to trauma associated with child abuse. Stress, trauma and violence negatively impact the structure and function of the brain (Parker, 1994; Goss & Fisicaro, 1999).

In a 1997 study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, newborn babies of mothers characterized as suffering from chronic depression showed the physical symptoms of it (Mc Ewen, 1994). These infants were less expressive, had slower reflexes, slept poorly, and had brain patterns similar to those of their depressed mothers. The developing brains of children (conception to three-years-old) are acutely vulnerable to trauma (Goss & Fisicaro, 1999). Studies at the Yale Child Study Center indicate the brain's structure is changed in children who experience repeated exposure to violent episodes. Trauma causes the release of stress hormones, such as cortisol, which wash over the child's tender brain like acid (Mc Ewen, 1996). As a result regions in the brain which are responsible for emotions are 20%-30% smaller in abused children. High cortisol levels - from conception to three years of age - also increase activity in an area of the brain related to vigilance and arousal, so the child's brain is on hair-trigger

alert. Moreover, there is evidence regions of the brain which were affected by the initial trauma can become re-activated when the child is reminded of it. The result may be "hyperactivity, anxiety, and impulsive behavior" (Parker, 1994).

Battering Adversely Affects Infants and Toddlers

The sounds of an adult's rage are overwhelming to a newborn's tender senses. Each time the batterer pounds on the table, storms around the house, shatters glass or slams the refrigerator door to intimidate his spouse, the infant's nervous system is also assaulted. "Shell shock" literally occurs in infants repeatedly traumatized by the violence around them. Physicians report treating injuries to the hands of infants who dig their nails into their palms during domestic disputes. These early images and experiences create an environment of anxiety which is the infant's first and lasting impression of the world as a dangerous place; because young children are dependent on their parents, and helpless to escape a violent atmosphere, both terror and powerlessness leave an indelible imprint on their brain.

Children living around violence may become irritable, experience developmental delays or fail to thrive; just picture this: the mother is focused on her own survival, the infant may lie there all alone -- teeth chattering, crying, or hyperventilating -- for the duration of each battle. Repeated stress and trauma may cause neurological damage which may, or may not, prove irreversible.

Older children see and hear the violence

63% of young men between the ages of 11 and 20 who are serving time for homicide killed their mother's abuser."

Children captive in the home are exposed to frightening noises, threats, and screams. They see the batterer charge toward the abused spouse, their mother thrown forcefully to the floor, threatened with a clenched fist. As witnesses to domestic violence, they see their parent sustain cuts, bruises, black eyes, or more serious injuries. Sometimes they see their love one killed. They

feel helpless in aiding their mother and often turn to violence themselves. Sixty-three percent of young men between the ages of eleven and twenty who are serving time for homicide killed their mother's abuser (Mc Cauley, 1997).

Children often become victims themselves: half of the children growing up in a home with domestic violence report being abused as adults. The abusive parent may embarrass, hit or threaten them. Children of violence hear (and learn from) the name calling, cursing, ridicule and humiliation of a parent. When they are repeatedly exposed to the ugly, contorted face of rage, they do not learn alternatives for expressing their feelings, resolving disagreements or effectively solving problems with a partner. Instead, they learn how to scream, hit, and show complete contempt for others. The effects of witnessing violence in the home are staggering.

For boys, violence becomes the primary method of conflict resolution. Why? Because it works! When these young boys watch their father's beat their mothers into submission, they learn to use the same behavior to get what they want. Girls are not immune. The violence they witness as children forms their altered perception of love. Violence and love become interchangeable. What is normal behavior for children raised in violent homes is completely different from that exhibited by children raised in normal, healthy environments.

Battering Leads To Emotional Abandonment

Fighting parents cannot attend to the child's emotional needs. The emotions that plague their children are mixed: fear and helplessness during the battle, anxiety in the aftermath: when is it going to happen again? How bad is it going to be next time? Eventually the child begins to feel guilty for failing to stop the batterer or save the abused parent or sibling. Without intervention, these feelings are never resolved, leading to the proverbial **vicious cycle**: as adults these children, themselves, become batterers and yet another generation of domestic abusers is born.

Battering Leads To Fear

Children experience terror and panic during each battering episode. They fear the abuser will turn on them next and worry about what will happen if mother is hurt or if their father is taken to jail. Older children know the removal of the abusive parent jeopardizes the economic base of the family and this creates an atmosphere of constant anxiety.

Violence in the home means being jumpy, watchful, and on guard at all times -- for both the victim and the children who witness it -- this becomes the norm. Battering episodes mean learning to read the abuser's every move, learning strategies to keep out of harm's way. Anxious children, trapped in the midst of recurring violence, do not dare fall asleep; certainly not until the "dust has settled," for, vigilance leads to survival. Living with violence means, even in sleep children do not have the luxury to be completely at peace; they sleep lightly and in fear of mortal danger. Abuse in the home means being awakened easily, even by the most innocent of noises: startled by a sudden scream, cry, the sound of someone being slapped, hit or thrown against the surroundings; the adrenalin flows, a result of the the activation of the "fight or flight" survival defense mechanism. The child is ready to flee in an instant!

Domestic violence creates paranoia or the feeling everyone and everything is potentially harmful: young girls may come to view all men as potential batterers or become frightened by any male voice raised in anger. These children feel a complete sense of powerlessness since they are unable to stop the abuse, fix the parents' relationship, or protect the parent or sibling who is being mistreated (Mc Cauley, 1997). Abused children feel like failures when they cannot intervene effectively.

Characteristics of Children Living in Violent Homes

Repeated exposure to violence affects children differently. Some may have show obvious symptoms, others may appear to be unharmed. Whatever their outward reaction, children who grow around it share similar behavioral and psychological characteristics.

Low self esteem

Children of abuse do not develop healthy concepts of self-worth; often, they blame themselves for the arguments and the violence. They believe it is their fault they are not loved by the abusive parent or protected from the battered spouse (Mc Carty, 1999). For example, children who are being battered second hand (by witnessing a parent's abuse) may believe if they were not so "bad" the battering would stop. They squelch their need for peace and comfort. Because these needs remain unaddressed, they translate that response to a lack of caring and, further, to "I am not worth caring about."

Violent homes create a feeling of shame in children. Shamed by the perpetrator's behaviors (This is the kind of father I have and these are the bad things he does) they tend to isolate themselves, carry the burden alone and become aloof. They reject others because they want to hide the horror of their home.

Children feel abandoned and betrayed by the parent who permits the abuse. This parent can not protect them. Victims of abuse believe the other parent is aware and does nothing to "save" them. Children believe their parents know all and see all. So when they do not stop abuse, they translate this as rejection: "My mom doesn't care how hurt I am." "If they loved me they wouldn't hurt me." The reality is children cannot understand the abused parent is fighting for her own survival and unable to make the bad situation disappear. The result is children around violence often learn to deny their own needs, learn to get their needs met by acting out, through manipulation, or by other indirect means.

"Why Mom?"

Anonymous

Years passed, slow and long,
while you watched or ignored,
your husband, the father of your children,
torment and bully, I must ask, "Why mom?"

Did not you find it the least bit odd,
or possibly a little bit strange,
the way he disciplined,
with anger and hits, I must ask,"Why mom?"

Surely, you were not that weak or blind,
to not have seen the torment,
that this man dished out,
on a daily basis, I must ask, "Why mom?"

I am not accusing or pointing the finger,
just mere curiosity, and I often ponder,
how could a mother, stay with a man,
known for his anger, and I must ask, "Why mom?"

Rapid Maturity

Children in violent homes take on adult roles prematurely, becoming responsible for the tasks their parents neglect. Family violence forces children to live in a tension-filled environment and to cope with very heavy adult problems, repeated trauma, and life-threatening situations. They may spend a lot of energy trying to make peace. They intervene in fights, call the police, or become involved in physical confrontations to protect or defend the abused mother.

Adolescents comfort the victimized parent or become surrogate caretakers to their younger siblings and, frequently, become crutches for the abused. They [redacted] the signs of trouble and become the victim's confidant.

Depression and Other Emotional Trauma

Many children exposed to violence experience long term depression, manifested by a deep, constant sadness which becomes clinical; neither flashbacks of violent episodes nor the problems associated with denial are uncommon. Repeated exposure to violence inundates and exhausts the child's nervous system, resulting in nervous disorders, anxiety, ulcers and panic attacks, feelings of helplessness, and suicidal ideation. Victimized children become aggressive and create havoc in other areas of their own lives. They are disruptive and have conduct problems that erupt in classrooms, playgrounds and other areas.

Violence interferes with the children's ability to remain bonded to their parents. The basic need for trust is violated and consequently, they are unable to trust others. They loose the ability to develop emotional relationships. This may develop into a control problem: as a fear of abuse from others or as a way to keep the abuse at bay. If they do not develop closeness to anyone, they do not have to fear. This feeling of isolation can create shyness resulting in withdrawal. Instead of learning how to be with others comfortably and learning how to get support from others, a child in a violent home learns how to be alone. They are taught to

keep the "family's little secret." It is difficult for the child to be confident or competent. They fear others might discover who they "really" are, or the shameful circumstances surrounding their lives. Isolation is a safe choice for the child or adult child of violence, and may aid in survival, but, it also creates a very lonely way of life.

Self-mutilation

Some children who experience or witness abuse adopt self-mutilating behaviors such as burning themselves, compulsively cutting or doing things to keep wounds from healing. Unable to externalize the rage they may internalize it and express it in the form of self-harm. Weight gain or loss are attempts to let their parents know they are hurting. Bulimia (self-induced binging and purging) is common among battered children and the need to become perfect which, they believe, may reduce the abuse is a constant driving force.

Extreme Reactions

Children who witness torture, or who are tortured themselves, may react to the abuse in extreme ways. The pain is real and many are unable to verbalize it. . "Accidents" among young children may be, in reality, suicide attempts and a way to escape a bad situation. Surrounded by adults who harm others, they may not learn to value themselves or learn to care about what happens to them, or other children, thus becoming "careless" and, in effect, "could care less!"

Children who witness abuse do not learn moderation and self-control; they learn, instead, to be irresponsible with food, money, drugs or alcohol. When the abusive partner is not held responsible for his violent outbursts, they learn battering has no consequences, that physical retaliation is how anger or frustration are handled. The result?: Cruelty, abusive or physically injurious behavior are

perceived as normal. A child who grows up in a home where things are thrown at someone or belongings are destroyed learns to regard these behaviors as perfectly normal.

Conclusion

Our society cannot continue to deny the strong correlation between violence in the home and criminal behavior in the community. Without positive outside influences children are at-risk of becoming future criminals. We have to save our children which in turn will promote safer and healthier communities. The evidence is powerful: prisons are filled with men who suffered, as children, physical and/or sexual abuse at home! (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997) Society must heed the "wake-up call." We have to save our children which in turn will promote safer and healthier communities.

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Domestic Violence and Children: Statistical Profile

- In a national survey of over 6,000 American families 50% of the men who frequently assaulted their own wives were also found to frequently abuse their children.
- Child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present.
- Men who have witnessed their parents' domestic violence are three times more likely to abuse their own wives than those of non violent parents; the sons of the most violent parents are 100 times more likely to become wife beaters
- Children who witness violence at home display emotional and behavioral disturbances as diverse as withdrawal, low self-esteem, nightmares, self-blame and aggression against peers and family members, cruelty to animals and disregard for other people's property.
- A comparison of delinquent and non-delinquent youth found that a history of family violence or abuse is the most significant difference between the two groups.
- 85% of Batterers watched domestic violence occur in their home and/or experienced child physical/sexual abuse themselves.
- Of all the boys aged 11-20 who are arrested for murder, 63% have killed the man who was assaulting their mother.
- Children raised in violent homes are:
  - 6 times as likely to commit suicide!
  - 26 times as likely to commit sexual assault!
  - 57 times as likely to abuse drugs!
- 74 times as likely to commit other crimes against persons!
- 28% of all females battered are pregnant
- The March of Dimes reports that more babies are now born with birth defects as a result of their mother being battered during pregnancy than from the combination of all the diseases and illnesses for which we immunize pregnant women.
- Children in violent homes are the target of abuse at a 1500% higher rate than the national average.
- Children in abusive homes display a host of problems: sleeplessness, stress and academic problems.

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